

Hating Jie

I am terrible at dealing with anger and hatred. Sometimes I bottle it up till I explode. Sometimes I vent it out on my family and friends. But I have learnt that the best way to deal with anger is simply to let it go, while love takes its place. That was how a person I used to hate and cry for became the most important person in my life. That person is my Jie (Chinese for "older sister").

When we were young, people used to ask if Jie and I were twins - she is in fact a year older than I am - because we looked so much alike. Each of us had short, windswept hair, brown under the light, twinkling eyes and a cute, crooked toothy smile. We were inseparable, and very close.

Puberty came like a winter storm. Jie changed. I changed. She grew out her long, straight hair; I got braces. But beyond our appearances, Jie became a different person. She used to be this adorable little girl who did her best to obey and to please others. Adolescence transformed her into a rebellious daredevil with no regard for rules and respect. She became the type of person who would challenge authority out of spite, who would scowl at a smiling stranger, who would deliberately ignore you for weeks on end, if you had done something to displease her, like borrow her clothes without asking (I would know).

But these were minor things. The biggest blow came one day while she was arguing with my mum about respect. The argument started when my mum sat her down privately, while I eavesdropped from the stairs, to tell her about her attitude and how it was affecting our family. As my mum finished what she had to say, looking at Jie with a hopeful smile, she responded with a cold stare and a hard whisper: "F*** you!"

I cried for a long time after that conversation. From the second she uttered that profanity I hated her. I hated her with every bit of my heart. She had hurt my mum, and hurt me so much.

I have never been so angry at anyone in my life. Every time I thought of how she cursed her own mother with the very word my mother had taught her never to say, I boiled up in anger. I wrote poems about her. I ranted about her to my close friends.

Jie and I were like two ships passing in the night in the months that followed. We never talked. We never had dinner together. We shared nothing in common, except blood and DNA.

Do you know what changed all that? Love did.

I returned from school one day to find a poem I wrote about Jie, called "Self-Destruction" - describing a young girl who was destroying herself with the hatred she felt for everyone else around her - lying on my Jie's table. I was stunned. I wrote it without intending her to read it.

"Li Shuen..." I heard her call my name as she entered through the doorway and saw me with the piece of paper in my hand.

"I saw what you wrote. And... I'm sorry," she barely whispered.

My mind was spinning, as my eyes flickered across the piece of paper in my hand. I caught these words: *She was a loveless creature/ Leading a loveless life/ Refusing to let love in/ And to let hatred go.*

I did not see Jie in these words. I saw myself. At the moment in time, with my sister standing in front of me, with that distance between us, I realized. I realized that I had been committing myself to hatred and anger for Jie, when I could have just let it go, and make life spent loving Jie so much more meaningful and enjoyable. As Jie stood in front of me, I looked directly at her face, something I had not done for a while. It was like looking into a mirror. Even though she had long hair, and her teeth were still crooked, and she was so much tanner, we were identical, to me. We were sisters.

All the anger dissolved. The distance between my sister and I dissolved.

Not long after that, at about the same time, both of us started opening up to each other. We have started talking and laughing together again. We may not be the closest sisters in the world, but we do not hate each other anymore. I love her, and she loves me.

That is why I say the best way to deal with anger is to let it go. Only then will it truly be gone. Only then will you be able to replace it with love and joy. And I am speaking from experience when I say a life full of love is so much more worth living.